

Vice Admiral Harvey E. Johnson Jr.

Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area

U. S. Maritime Defense Zone Pacific

Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator



Vice Admiral Harvey Johnson assumed the duties of Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area in June 2004. The area of operations for the Pacific Area encompasses over 73 million miles west of the Rocky Mountains and throughout the Pacific Basin to the Far East. Prior to this assignment, he was the Commander, Seventh Coast Guard District and served as the Director, Homeland Security Task Force-Southeast, where he directed Operation Able Sentry, the Department of Homeland Security response to the crisis in Haiti. In addition to these duties, Vice Admiral Johnson served as the Executive Director of the Coast Guard's transition into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Director of Operations Capability and Director of Operations Policy.

CHIPS: Can you discuss the Coast Guard's homeland security mission in terms of the greater role the USCG now has in national defense?

Vice Adm. Johnson: The Coast Guard is designated as the lead federal agency for maritime homeland security. This has become a visible representation of our contribution to the safety and protection of America. Maritime Security now stands alongside search and rescue as primary missions for the Coast Guard and demonstrates that we are a multi-mission service. So, while we bring a sharp operational focus to maritime security, we continue to meet the American public's expectations to protect domestic fisheries and the marine environment, prevent illegal drug and alien migrant flow, and provide service aids to navigation, along with all our other missions.

The Coast Guard has new responsibility and authority to meet the challenges of maritime security. Passage of the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) of 2002 expanded Coast Guard authorities to require security plans from ships that trade with our nation as well as for the maritime facilities in our ports. The Act also established Coast Guard Captains of the Port as Federal Maritime Security Coordinators. This mission fits well with the Coast Guard because we have a lot of experience in working with federal, state and local agencies, DoD, the maritime industry and the public.

We have also added new capabilities. For example, we have added almost 4,500 people, acquired new patrol boats, and new response boats, and commissioned 13 Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSSTs). MSSTs consist of small boats and crews specially trained in maritime security tactics. Within these teams, we have — for the first time — an undersea detection capability, with divers and specialized sensors to scan piers and other structures to ensure that facilities and moored vessels are safe.

The MSSTs also have canine teams that can detect the presence of explosives. We have fielded Sea Marshals and have new vessel and facility inspectors. We have greatly expanded our partnerships with federal, state and local agencies as well as those in the maritime industry. When you add all of these capacities together, you can understand how the Coast Guard has helped to bring about a far greater level of safety and security in our maritime environment since 9/11.

CHIPS: Are these new capabilities part of your transformation process?

Vice Adm. Johnson: That's an interesting question. Transformation generally connotes a fundamental change in an organization's approach to a task, perhaps transforming from one paradigm to another. In that respect, I view the changes the Coast Guard is experiencing as more of an adaptation than a transformation, as we adapt to a more aggressive readiness posture to meet the challenges of maritime security.

One of the strengths of the Coast Guard is that we maintain a broad set of organizational competencies and are flexible enough to adapt them to rapidly meet the emerging maritime safety and security needs of our nation. Over the past few years, we have drawn on our law enforcement and maritime safety competencies to very quickly acquire and employ the new capabilities that we just discussed. We then took the same approach to adapt vertical insertion and armed helicopters from drug enforcement to the broader challenge of maritime security. I think that is one reason the American people find such value and ascribe such credibility to the Coast Guard.

CHIPS: How does the Coast Guard's mission complement the U.S. Navy's role in maritime defense?

Vice Adm. Johnson: The Coast Guard's maritime homeland security mission and our maritime homeland defense responsibility are complementary to the Navy's maritime homeland defense responsibilities. This is so by design, and by more than a century of practice between our services in meeting maritime challenges.

Our service chiefs, Admiral Collins and Admiral Clark, are leading us in implementing a National Fleet concept. This is a concept that was initiated by their predecessors, but one they have taken to a new level. It essentially recognizes the value of a synergistic relationship between the Navy and Coast Guard such that we work together expressly to pursue a course of building and sustaining complementary capabilities.

We each harbor specific assets, capabilities and competencies that, together, meet the full spectrum of the nation's maritime requirements. We work well in either a supporting or supported relation-

ship and understand and manage the seams between those roles very well. For example, one of my strongest partners in providing maritime security in the Pacific area is Admiral Mike McCabe, commander of the Third Fleet.

Conversely, I stand ready to assist Admiral McCabe in meeting his maritime defense responsibilities. And our relationship is more than just that of a wiring diagram or abstract organizational plan. Admiral McCabe and I confer frequently on a personal level and our staffs talk, plan and act together every day. We have total visibility of our combined forces, so that if a maritime event occurs in the Pacific area, Admiral McCabe and I will work collectively. Whether the mission is homeland security or homeland defense, we must cooperate to ensure we bring the right capability to bear.

You will find the same relationship in the Atlantic between the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area and the Navy's Second Fleet. So, across the Atlantic and Pacific, the Coast Guard and Navy have created a complementary relationship with visibility of appropriate chains of command, which for homeland defense is under the operational control of Admiral Keating at U. S. Northern Command. All of this reflects a well-constructed command and control structure that Admiral Keating has worked hard to formalize, exercise and refine so that the nation will be secure in all domains, maritime as well as air and land.

CHIPS: Can you discuss the USCG Maritime Strategy?

Vice Adm. Johnson: Shortly after 9/11, the commandant directed development of the Coast Guard's Maritime Strategy for Homeland Security because he saw a need to provide a clear sense of strategic direction to strengthen security within the maritime domain. The nation was rightfully laser-focused on enhancing aviation security, and we had not yet concentrated on maritime vulnerabilities.

This visionary document brought synergy and alignment from a number of different and complementary views on the steps required for the Coast Guard to set a true course. We are conducting enhanced maritime security operations with new capabilities and with far greater capacity than we had a short time ago. The nation and the world maritime community, following a port-by-port round of vulnerability assessments, have taken positive steps to close port security gaps.

We have leveraged partnerships across the board with significant results in mitigating security risks. All of these efforts resulted in enhanced readiness to meet maritime security challenges. While we have made progress in building essential capabilities and competencies, there is still some distance to go to meet the maritime security expectations of the American public.

Dec. 21, 2004, President Bush signed the National Security Presidential Directive 41/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 13 (NSPD 41/HSPD 13) that tasked the Department of Defense and the DHS to jointly prepare a Maritime Security Strategy for our nation. The President doesn't sign many Presidential Directives, but by signing this one he raised maritime security to the center stage for our nation. He set an aggressive time line for a deliverable within 180 days. Teams of talented people from both Departments are working very hard to make that deadline. They will develop an overall

strategy as well as a family of supporting plans that focus on elements essential to meeting the strategy's objectives. I think these teams are better positioned for success because of the initiatives taken and thought generated by the Coast Guard's strategy.

CHIPS: Can you discuss the role that the USCG Research & Technology Center is playing to increase the effectiveness of the Coast Guard?

Vice Adm. Johnson: The Coast Guard's Research and Development Center has been very successful in supporting the fast pace with which we have embraced our new mission challenges. I have worked with them over the years and appreciate their unique talent for understanding our operational requirements from the field perspective, and scouring the full range of potential technological solutions, and then being creative in finding ways to bridge between the two: adapting existing and near-term technology to help solve emerging operational challenges.

Now that we are part of DHS, our R&D Center falls under the DHS larger umbrella of the Science and Technology Directorate, and that has expanded the horizons across which our staff can scan technology. This has brought tremendous new resources and you don't need to look very hard to see evidence of success. In Miami, the center brought together a number of surveillance systems, which serve as a baseline for command center integration of sensor technologies. They are examining radiation detection and explosive detection equipment to find the right combination for the maritime environment. In other areas ranging from ferry security and swimmer interdiction to risk modeling and human system integration, they are finding ways to guide the Coast Guard in more effective mission performance.

CHIPS: Can you talk about the new Coast Guard vessels and specialized maritime and security units?

Vice Adm. Johnson: Let me focus on three aspects that I think tell a representative story about how our capabilities strengthen the nation's homeland security posture. The first is our 13 new MSSTs. Each unit is comprised of 75 professional men and women who operate their new homeland security boats in our most significant ports and waterways. They are deployable on short notice anywhere in the United States, and have even been deployed overseas to the waters of other nations.

MSST personnel are highly trained in law enforcement waterborne tactics, use of force with both lethal and non-lethal weapons, and they employ specialty capabilities such as canine handling, undersea security, vertical insertion and radiation detection. On a typical day, they will spend a preponderance of the 24-hour period on the water conducting surveillance patrols, escorting vessels, enforcing security zones and providing a deterrent presence. These teams provide so much visibility that I think they are a major reason that many people feel confident about our maritime security.

Not quite as visible, but equally important at emphasizing the element of prevention of attack, we have a whole new cadre of vessel and facility inspectors. These folks are also highly trained and expertly knowledgeable about all of our new MTSA vessel and facility security regulations and requirements. They board foreign flag vessels, often miles out to sea, and conduct verification examinations

to ensure that each vessel complies with our comprehensive new security requirements. They also board marine facilities in our ports to work with facility owners and operators to ensure that the required level of security, mariner credentialing and contingency planning have been completed. These are the people who make certain that commercial cruise ships are safe and that vulnerability is mitigated. They do this every day, at all hours of the day. These teams of inspectors offer visibility and convey a reason to feel confident about our maritime security.

As the third aspect, we focus not only on new vessels and capabilities, but also on the many current capabilities of our stations, air stations, patrol boats, aids to navigation teams, buoy tenders, large cutters and all of the other Coast Guard forces that continuously stand ready in a prevention and response posture to perform whatever mission may come their way. For example, while many Americans have seen a significant increase in Coast Guard presence in our ports and coastal approaches, a significant element of our National Homeland Security Strategy is to press the borders out to engage threats as far from our shores as possible.

The Coast Guard does this every day with our cutter fleet and long-range aircraft. Our young Coasties man 38-year-old cutters from the Bearing Sea in Alaska to the Eastern Pacific off the coast of Colombia, throughout the Atlantic and into the Caribbean Sea and even to the Persian Gulf. They detect, deter, interdict and defeat threats posed by those who would like to exploit the maritime domain for illegal purposes. This challenge will be made easier over the next couple of decades as our Deepwater project begins to replace aging and obsolescent platforms with new and more capable assets. But the point is, all of the Coast Guard, new and old is keenly intent on meeting the nation's maritime challenges.

CHIPS: Can you talk about Coast Guard interoperability with the other services and federal, local and state agencies?

Vice Adm. Johnson: I was hoping you would get to that issue. Interoperability is so very important to ensuring that we have a coordinated and effective presence of all maritime capabilities in the threat environment. I'll mention two aspects. First, interoperability presumes we know whom we need to work with, so we're talking about identifying key partnerships with agencies across the federal, state and local spectrum as well as those in the maritime community and with the public.

One of the primary vehicles for this is the Area Maritime Security Committees that have been established in each of our major ports as required by the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002. These committees have been formed under the leadership of our Captains of the Port acting in their new roles as the Federal Maritime Security Coordinators. Each committee has prepared an Area Maritime Security Plan that has been approved, and we are now in the process of beginning to exercise those plans. Of course, the action to write and execute a plan is an excellent process to wring out any areas of non-interoperability and fix them.

The second issue is to address the elements of interoperability with our partners and resolve any gaps. That is sometimes harder to do because it requires resources to adapt communications systems, integrate databases and bring into alignment differing processes

of planning and execution. There are a number of excellent initiatives that are helping to eliminate gaps. The most significant is the recent DHS requirement that all agencies begin to use the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as a process for organizing and conducting incident response. We are working with other agencies on a range of other command and control capabilities to increase the degree of interoperability across the board.

CHIPS: Does the Coast Guard participate in exercises with the other services and coalition forces?

Vice Adm. Johnson: We certainly do. We have always followed an aggressive exercise regime for oil spill response as well as participating in military defense exercises on a national and international scale. The oil spill regime took on a greater degree of fidelity following the Exxon Valdez catastrophe. And as I mentioned, we will soon begin an aggressive exercise regime in each of our major ports as they begin to exercise their Area Maritime Security Plans. On a national scale, U.S. Northern Command will soon conduct TOPOFF 3, a multiregional exercise that will test response capabilities and command and control structures. Several of these vignettes will have a maritime nexus and will involve a number of federal, state and local maritime agencies working together under some very challenging situations.

Here on the West Coast, the Pacific Area and the Navy's Third Fleet will sponsor Exercise Lead Shield/Roguex in the Port of Los Angeles – Long Beach in May. This will involve federal, state and local agencies as they work with maritime partners to evaluate our ability to respond to a homeland security threat scenario in a major port. There will be exercises coming up in August in Alaska where we will work with DoD services to test our response capabilities. And, we will exercise later in the year with some of our international Pacific Rim partners. So as you can see, exercises are a very important element in maintaining readiness for the Coast Guard as well as for creating broader collective maritime security capabilities.

CHIPS: Can you talk about how Coast Guard training and doctrine have changed to meet your new mission requirements since 9/11?

Vice Adm. Johnson: One of the threads that runs through my responses to your questions is the degree to which all of our Coast Guard forces — and I mean all to include our boat forces, marine safety offices and aids to navigation teams and others — have attained a heightened homeland security response posture. We have more armed Coast Guard forces, boats and people in our domestic ports and coastal approaches now than at any time in our recent history, likely since World War II.

Our boat forces are still being trained in high speed, tactical operations. Some of our helicopter crews are being qualified in aviation use of force tactics and outfitted with weapons for fire support. We have boarding teams skilled at vertical delivery for some of the most challenging homeland security scenarios. Many of these skills are not just employed in domestic ports, they also have expeditionary capabilities such as the patrol boats and Law Enforcement Detachments deployed to the Persian Gulf. So when you put all of this together, you can see that the nature of our operations and our operational environment have changed significantly since 9/11, and so have our capabilities and supporting training and doctrine.

CHIPS: Has the Coast Guard increased in size?

Vice Adm. Johnson: I am pleased to say that the Coast Guard has grown in size in the last three years at a pace almost as fast as our mission growth. The President, former Secretary Ridge, and now Secretary Chertoff, have been very strong advocates for the Coast Guard. And, the Congress has responded. We have grown by more than 4,500 people in the last three years to a force size of approximately 42,000. While still not a huge number of people given our broad mission requirements, this is a significant step in the right direction.

This rapid growth has presented a number of challenges for us. As you know, our system brings people in at the entry level and they gain experience through formal training and through engagement in various operational missions. None of the needed experience comes overnight. So we have a lot of junior people who are working hard to learn and gain seasoning as fast as they can. And, we have a lot of senior people who are taking more time to nurture and mentor the junior folks to bring them along faster to meet our mission requirements. This would be a more significant challenge were it not for the quality of people we have in the Coast Guard today. I have to tell you that it is inspiring to go out and visit our operational units and witness these fine young people in action. They are positive, engaged and proud of what they do.

CHIPS: In terms of recruiting, what types of people are attracted to serving in the Coast Guard?

Vice Adm. Johnson: The Coast Guard attracts bright young people who want to serve their country by accomplishing one or more of the exciting missions they see in our military, multi-mission, maritime service. The Coast Guard has core values of Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty. We attract people who affinity to those values. And we serve all of America, so we attract people from all aspects of American society to meet our diversity objectives to look like the America we serve.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, our people are just fantastic. They are highly trained; they are highly educated. They want to do good for America. They're loyal and they're patriotic. Just by nature, a Coast Guard member wants to help other people. They come into the Coast Guard because of our broad safety and security mission. They see rescue swimmers and lifesavers; they see maritime security boats and port security experts. They see that we protect the environment. They see our large cutters deploy to enforce fishery laws and bust drug and migrant smugglers. They want a piece of the action. And on an almost daily basis, they get to participate in interesting missions and challenges.

I tell our young people that there has never been a better time to be in our service. We are more visible and appreciated by America than at any time in my 34 years of service. We have new equipment and good training as we have discussed. And, we are beginning to see the entry of new equipment and systems from our Deepwater project that will transform our capacity and capability to meet the maritime requirements of our nation. Just last week, Secretary Chertoff and the commandant presided at the keel laying ceremony for our National Security Cutter, the first of many Deepwater cutters that will replace our 38-year-old High Endurance Cutters.

We are a key component in the new Department of Homeland Security, which is increasingly providing value for the nation as it draws together 22 different agencies. And we are on the cusp of implementing the President's evolving National Maritime Security Strategy. It is an exciting time to be in the Coast Guard, and we are attracting talented people motivated to meet these challenges.

CHIPS: I read that the Coast Guard responded to the tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia, delivering over 350,000 pounds of food, medical supplies, water purification equipment, assessment teams, and even toys to the tsunami-stricken countries of Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. I am just stunned by how much the Coast Guard mission has expanded and how well it responds.

Vice Adm. Johnson: Our mission portfolio has expanded, a reflection I think of the growing appreciation for the importance and the particular challenges of the maritime domain. You are not unlike a lot of people who for one reason or another have viewed the Coast Guard through the lens of just one of our missions. Then, when exposed to the full range of our missions are impressed and appreciative.

We believe we provide a good return on investment for the American taxpayer. When the nation invests in a Coast Guard boat, that single boat can save a life, catch a drug runner, bust a migrant smuggler, or patrol and protect a port, and can very quickly respond to any of those missions as an event occurs. And we leverage that investment because of the leadership role we play with other federal, state and local agencies, the maritime community and the public. While I'll admit that I'm a bit biased, I think the Coast Guard is an amazing service. And most people who join the Coast Guard love it for that reason.

CHIPS: All Americans have a deep appreciation for the Coast Guard. Just think about the statistics. Today, the Coast Guard will: save 15 lives; assist 117 people in distress; protect \$2.8 million in property; interdict 30 illegal migrants at sea; conduct 90 search and rescue cases; seize \$21 million worth of illegal drugs; respond to 11 oil and hazardous chemical spills and board and inspect 122 vessels. You are heroes, and you prove it every day.

Vice Adm. Johnson: Thank you for your love of the Coast Guard, but more importantly, thank you for your support of the Coast Guard through the service and information you provide to Coast Guard people and to the public at large.

CHIPS: Would you like to do a roll call of the diversity of your mission in closing?

Vice Adm. Johnson: Maritime Safety, which includes search and rescue, marine safety, recreational boating safety, international ice patrol, port security. Maritime Mobility, including aids to navigation, icebreaking services, vessel traffic/waterways management, bridge administration, rules of the road. Maritime Security, including drug interdiction, alien migrant interdiction, marine resources preservation. General Maritime Law Enforcement, including law/treaty enforcement. National Defense, including general defense duties, homeland security, port and waterways security, marine pollution education, foreign vessel inspections, and marine and environmental science.

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